SUMMARY OF RELATED LAWS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE

Government Code Sections 29000 through 30200 provide the statutory requirements pertaining to the form and content of the state Controller's prescribed Line-Item Budget. Government Code Section 29009 requires a balanced budget in the proposed and final budgets, defined as "the budgetary requirements shall equal the available financing".

COUNTY CODE

Title 1. Division 2. Chapter 2:

Section 12.023:

The Administrative Officer shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors.

Section 12.026:

Under the supervision of the Board of Supervisors, and subject to the approval and direction and control thereof, the Administrative Officer shall supervise the preparation of the annual County Budget. In the performance of this duty the Administrative Officer shall review all departmental and agency requests and all items in the proposed budget, including revenues, expenditures and reserves. He shall submit his recommendation on the proposed budget to the Board of Supervisors.

BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

Governmental fund types are accounted for using the modified accrual basis of accounting. Under this method, revenues are recognized when measurable and available. Property and sales taxes, interest, certain state and federal grants and charges for services are accrued if their receipt occurs within sixty days after the end of the accounting period, and recognized as revenue.

Expenditures are generally recorded when a liability is incurred, as under accrual accounting. Exceptions to this general rule include: principal and interest on long-term debt is recognized when due; prepaid expenses are reported as current period expenditures, rather than allocated; and accumulated unpaid vacation, sick leave, and other employee benefits are reported in the period due and payable rather than in the period earned by employees.

Proprietary fund types are accounted for on the accrual basis of accounting. Their revenues are recognized in the period earned and expenses are recognized in the period incurred.

BASIS OF BUDGETING

Governmental Funds:

An operating budget is adopted each fiscal year for the governmental fund types in accordance with provisions of the County Budget Act. The County's financial statement, the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), is prepared using generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). Budgets for the governmental fund types are adopted with the following differences from GAAP:

Encumbrance accounting is employed in governmental funds. For budget purposes, outstanding encumbrances (which represent the unspent amounts of purchase orders and contracts funded in the fiscal year), are treated as expenditures in that fiscal year. This affects only the "actual" data that appears in this budget book. For GAAP purposes, in the fund financial statements of the CAFR, encumbrances outstanding at year-end are reported as reservations of fund balances and do not constitute expenditures and liabilities. Appropriations for these encumbrance commitments survive the expiration of the fiscal year to the extent that encumbrances exist. Encumbrances cancelled subsequent to the end of the fiscal year also cancel the underlying appropriation.

On a budgetary basis, unrealized gains and losses on the fair value of investments are not recognized. For GAAP purposes, such gains or losses are recognized.

Proprietary Funds:

The Board of Supervisors approves an annual spending plan for proprietary funds. Although the adopted expense estimates are not appropriations, their budgetary controls are the same as those of the governmental fund types. Because these funds collect fees and revenues generally to cover the cost of the goods and services they provide, their accounting and budgeting bases are closer to commercial models. Budgeting, like accounting, is done on the accrual basis and generally according to GAAP.

COUNTY BUDGET AND FINANCE POLICIES

When building the 2006-07 budget, the County Administrative Office adhered to the County's four financing policies; 1) the budget financing policy, which holds that one-time funds shall not be used to finance ongoing operational costs; 2) the reserve policy, which maintains an ongoing general purpose reserve equal to 10% of locally funded appropriation, coupled with an appropriated contingency fund equal to 1.5% of locally funded appropriation; 3) the debt policy, which calls for the prudent management of liabilities, and wherever possible, the pursuit of alternative sources of funding in order to minimize the level of debt; and 4) the capital budget policy, which ensures that the County maintains its public infrastructure in the most cost efficient manner. Below is a detailed description of these County financing policies:

Budget Financing Policy

The objective of the Budget Financing Policy is to help ensure the County has adequate resources to meet its basic financial obligations, and to serve as a vehicle to help the County achieve financial continuity and stability.

Balanced Budget

The annual operating budget will be structurally balanced upon adoption by the Board of Supervisors. Total revenues, including carry-over fund balances, will equal the total fund appropriation and reserves, unless within the context of a larger plan to balance ongoing revenues and expenses over a multi-year period, as detailed under "Use of one-time funding sources". Significant budget variances and recommended actions will be reported to the Board of Supervisors.

Long Range Planning

As part of the annual budget process, the County will prepare a multi-year forecast of financial operations for general fund programs based on current service levels and expected future changes to those programs or service levels. The County will project major revenues and expenditures of the general fund, and report significant findings and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Use of one-time funding sources

The appropriation of carryover fund balances and other one-time funding sources must be managed with care. Carryover fund balance is most appropriately used to fund one-time expenses such as capital expenditures or start-up costs for new programs. Other types of one-time funding sources may also be used to fund one-time costs, or to supplement reserves. It is the policy of the County that one-time funds will not be used to finance ongoing operational costs, except within the context of a larger plan to balance ongoing revenues and costs over a multi-year period. Such a plan could involve short-term use of one-time funds to preserve essential public services where longer–term financial forecasts demonstrate the near-term future potential for ongoing revenues to fund those services.

Revenue Forecasting

Because of the complexity of the County budget, realistic projections of revenue are crucial to accurate budgeting. Revenue forecasting will be undertaken annually through a review of local historical revenue trends and analysis of federal, state, and local economic projections. Especially in regard to those revenues which tend to be most volatile and sensitive to changes in the economy, forecasting will involve analysis of economic, demographic, business cycle and other factors which might impact those revenues. These unpredictable revenues, including interest income and fees, will be estimated and budgeted conservatively. Revenue forecasts will not be based on straight-line assumptions.

Fees

The County will review and adjust fees for service, as necessary, and adopt them as part of the annual budget process. In most cases, departmental fees should fully recover the costs of providing the service, including identified indirect or overhead costs.

Program Efficiency and Performance Measurement

Efficiency and economy in the delivery of County services is a top priority. The County will develop a program to integrate performance measures within the budget. County departments will be encouraged to make productivity improvements within their service delivery areas.

Reserve Policy

The objective of the Reserve Policy is to help protect the County from unforeseen increases in expenditures or reductions in revenues, or from extraordinary events which might otherwise substantially harm the fiscal health of the County. In so doing, it is also intended to help avoid undue service level fluctuations during periods of economic instability.

General Purpose Reserves

The maintenance of an adequate operating reserve is essential to the financial strength and flexibility of the County, and operating reserves are considered an integral part of the County's financial structure. Such reserves and designations are considered to be those that have no identified contingent liability or specific future use. The County shall establish a general purpose reserve for the general fund targeted at 10% of locally funded appropriations.

Appropriations for Contingencies

The County will maintain an appropriated contingency fund to accommodate unanticipated operational changes, legislative impacts, or other economic events affecting the County's operations which could not have been reasonably anticipated at the time the budget was prepared. The County shall place in contingencies no less than 1.5% of locally funded appropriations.

Debt Policy

The objective of the County's Debt management policy is to minimize the amount of outstanding debt necessary to fulfill its infrastructure and economic development responsibilities, as well as to maintain the County's ability to incur present and future debt at minimal interest rates. The use of debt shall not endanger the County's ability to finance essential County services. The County recognizes that capital markets change and unforeseen circumstances may occur resulting in situations that are not covered by this policy. In such situations, flexibility to modify certain policy requirements may be necessary to achieve policy goals.

General
Debt will not be used to finance on-going operational costs. However, debt may be used, where economically efficient, to reduce or eliminate current long-term operational liabilities. Whenever possible, the County shall pursue alternative sources of funding, when cost effective, in order to minimize the level of debt.

Types of Debt
General Obligation Bonds (property tax supported) usage will be evaluated first since it is the least costly debt. Public support will be assessed for ballot placement due to the costs involved for an election. Revenue Bonds/Certificates of Participation may be considered for use where General Obligation Bonds are not practical. Short-term borrowing, such as commercial paper, bond anticipation notes, and lines of credit, will be considered as interim funding sources in anticipation of long-term financing.

Issuance
The County may elect to issue bonds/certificates of participation as variable rate instruments to provide flexibility and /or to attempt to achieve interest savings. There are guidelines to be considered when issuing variable rate debt: 1) Economic and cash flow projections for variable rate issues shall be calculated at the then applicable fixed rate. 2) The County will first consider structuring the principal and interest repayments related to the entire project for which the debt will be issued on an approximately equal annual basis over the life of the borrowing. 3) Total variable rate debt shall be limited to no more than 25% of total debt outstanding. 4) No less than annually, analysis of each outstanding variable rate bond issue shall be undertaken to determine the advisability of converting the issue to fixed-rate debt. 5) Variable rate bonds shall be structured to protect the County to the greatest extent possible against cyclical interest rate fluctuations.

Management
County financial management policies shall be designed to maintain a balanced relationship between debt service requirements and current operating costs, encourage growth of the tax base, actively seek alternative funding sources, minimize interest costs and maximize investment returns. In accordance with this principle, the following must be considered: 1) The County shall issue bonds with terms no longer than the economic useful life of the project. 2) The County shall obtain secured guarantees for bonds supported by a dedicated revenue source to the extent possible. 3) The County shall also obtain assurances of project viability and guarantees of completion prior to the issuance of bonds. 4) The County shall invest the proceeds of bond / certificates of participation sales to conform to State and County requirements to maximize investment security and earnings. 5) The County shall establish affordability guidelines in order to preserve credit quality, which may be suspended for emergency purposes, or because of unusual circumstances.

Capital Budget Policy

The objective of the Capital Budget policy is to ensure that the County maintains its public infrastructure in the most cost efficient manner. The County's capital budget will include as complete, reliable, and attainable cost estimates as possible.

Project cost estimates for the Capital Budget should be based upon a thorough analysis of the project and are expected to be as reliable as the level of detail known about the project. All Capital Budget proposals shall be formulated and presented to the Board of Supervisors within the framework of a general capital budget in conjunction with the operating County General Fund Budget. Capital projects which are not encumbered or completed during the fiscal year will be re-budgeted or carried over to the next fiscal year, except as reported to and subsequently approved by the Board.

Periodic financial reports will be prepared to enable the County Administrative Office to monitor/manage the capital budget and compare actual program revenues and expenditures with budgeted amounts. The Board may take necessary action, including increasing appropriation or revenue, to maintain a balanced Capital Budget. Major capital assets will be inventoried and assessed on an annual basis to project long-term equipment replacement and maintenance needs